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OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

Letter dated 6 May 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the 97th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union was held at Seoul from 10 to 15 April 1997, at the invitation of the Parliament of the Republic of Korea. The Conference brought together 572 Members of Parliament from 118 countries and the representatives of 25 observer delegations.

As the host country of the 97th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I also have the honour to transmit to you herewith the results of the Conference.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly.

(Signed) PARK Soo Gil
Permanent Representative

* A/S-19/1 (to be issued).

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ANNEX

[Original: English and French]

MEASURES REQUIRED TO CHANGE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS WITH A VIEW TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Resolution adopted without a vote by the 97th Inter-Parliamentary Conference (Seoul, 14 April 1997)

The 97th Inter-Parliamentary Conference,

Wishing to contribute to the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Agenda 21,

1. *Urges* parliaments and parliamentarians the world over to bring pressure to bear on their governments to ensure that, as they participate in the June 1997 global evaluation of Rio follow-up measures, they reaffirm the commitments undertaken in 1992, adopt decisions making it possible to reinforce action taken since then, and set concrete, measurable goals with precise deadlines, and *calls* on parliaments to adopt measures to establish the legal framework for honouring such commitments;

2. *Urges* that parliamentarians be included in the National Delegations attending the special session of the United Nations General Assembly and *recommends* that delegations to the next IPU Conference present an assessment of measures taken by governments, and of progress achieved on proposals approved during the 97th Inter-Parliamentary Conference (Seoul, April 1997);

3. *Adopts* the following Declaration to be submitted to the General Assembly Special Session.

DECLARATION OF THE 97th INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

THE VIEWS OF PARLIAMENTS ON THE RESULTS AND FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

"To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies."
(Principle 8 of the Rio Declaration)

Throughout its evaluations of the follow-up to Rio, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been struck by the fact that, although the Earth Summit created general awareness of the issues relating to sustainable development, this awareness has not brought about a world-wide improvement in the environment through a radical shift in the dominant development model or a reduction in inequalities between rich and poor within countries and from one region to another.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union cautions against the dangers of a « wait-and-see policy », which has already led to a worsening of the situation since Rio and could cause the destruction of humanity. It believes that preserving the world partnership for sustainable development should be given the highest possible priority, and that governments of both North and South therefore have no choice but to honour the commitments undertaken after lengthy consideration in Rio.

In this connection, it forcefully reaffirms that granting the developing countries foreseeable, new and additional financial resources remains one of the keys to the achievement of sustainable development throughout the world.

Considering however that the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the concept of sustainable development are inseparable, it realises that financial input on its own is not enough. It must be accompanied by an overall policy likely to ensure that this concept becomes ingrained in citizens' behaviour. The advantage of such a policy is that it also mobilises additional resources and allows cost savings, e.g. by reducing expenditure on repairing damage caused by unsustainable production and consumption patterns.

The question of consumption and production patterns is at the core of sustainable development issues. It crystallises the aspiration of all inhabitants of the planet to live in the best possible conditions and pass on to their descendants an environment which will enable them in turn to achieve this legitimate aspiration. It touches on the notion of interdependence between generations and between the different countries and regions.

This fundamental issue is at the heart of the concerns which gave rise to UNCED:

- Civilisation today is endangered by the consequences of overexploitation of resources, which compromises the Earth's capacity to sustain the human species and other forms of life ;

- Despite this overexploitation of nature, hundreds of millions of persons still live below the poverty threshold ;

- Such inequalities constitute an ongoing threat to the peace and security of many countries and, ultimately, to the economic and political stability of the planet.

In Rio, States had the following to say :

- The constant degradation of the world environment is primarily due to lifestyles and consumption patterns that stand in the way of sustainable development ;

- These lifestyles and consumption patterns are largely due to the development model of the industrialised world ;

- It is essential to alter them since most countries in the world use this model as a basis .

On the basis of these considerations, governments committed themselves, within the framework of the principle of « common yet differentiated responsibility » :

- To seeking production patterns which, while favouring growth, on the one hand reduce consumption of energy and non-renewable resources and on the other hand limit pollution, particularly the production of environmentally harmful waste ;

- To adopting harmonious consumption patterns which could be satisfied by natural resources on a sustainable basis.

Since UNCED and despite difficulties in applying the recommendations of Agenda 21, there are signs of progress:

- Community organisations and the media are playing an increasingly important role in encouraging consumers to adopt environmentally sound lifestyles;

- Consumers in industrialised countries appear more willing to opt for non-polluting, recyclable products. Accordingly, a broad range of goods, services and equipment has been designed on the basis of environmental considerations;

- Some governments have set an example by applying instruments for intervention in such fields as regulation, incentives and disincentives, information and education, and the development and dissemination of environmentally sound technologies ;

Although encouraging, such process is far from sufficient to meet the soaring increase in human needs generated by unsustainable population growth and a development model based on unsound utilisation of natural resources. Indeed, eminent observers have noted that the world has reached the limits of resources available to satisfy such needs.

Soil depletion, dwindling water resources, world-wide deforestation, depletion of ocean resources, emissions of gas into the atmosphere etc., are seriously jeopardising humanity's chances for survival.

The number of areas experiencing food shortages is on the increase due to declining production and rising prices.

Collision with the limits of development could well lead to major destabilisation of societies, for the environmental crisis causes not only damage to the environment but economic decline and social disintegration as well. In an ever-growing number of countries, the economic impact of pollution and depletion of natural resources has resulted in falling production, lost jobs and declining exports. Yet the Inter-Parliamentary Union recognises that radical changes in the behaviour patterns that have led to this situation cannot be made overnight. However, rethinking society in the light of natural constraints and limits, and reconsidering a conception of well-being and prosperity which is based on the idea that natural resources are free and may be utilised indefinitely, must be a rapid process.

Accordingly, it appeals to all actors - authorities, companies, NGOs, international and national organisations, academia and, in particular, the scientific community, etc. - to encourage and join in such a process.

It urges governments and parliaments to redouble their efforts to adopt and implement national and international policies which are really conducive to harmonising lifestyles with the fundamental principles of sustainable development, though without lowering living standards and the quality of life.

It recalls in this connection the need to integrate environmental considerations at all levels of economic decision-making by studying and adopting policy packages and complementary instruments like the phasing-out of subsidies conducive to environmentally harmful production patterns, the internalisation of environmental costs, eco-taxes, the application of the « polluter pays » principle, together with that of rewarding non-polluters, systematic environmental impact studies, etc.

It calls for the adoption at the international level of adequately co-ordinated measures to promote environmental consciousness in trade so as to prevent ecological damage as well as importation and exportation of goods that are produced using non environmentally sound technologies, without introducing non-tariff barriers to trade with developing countries.

It recommends that governments introduce such measures and instruments by stages after conducting awareness-building campaigns, and that they provide financial compensation for vulnerable groups, households and small and medium-sized industries whose costs could well rise.

It invites those responsible for economic policy and regional development to adopt the eco-space concept so as to ensure that the consumption potential of the inhabitants of a given region matches the carrying capacity of the region's ecosystems.

It stresses the usefulness of the principle of eco-efficiency which makes it possible to maximise the productivity of energy and material inputs in order to reduce resource consumption and pollution/waste per unit of output.

It stresses the need to rationalise transport of passengers and goods so as to avoid the increase in ecological and social costs which derives from new patterns of production and life-styles.

It invites governments to pursue their efforts along these lines by systematically applying eco-efficiency criteria themselves, *inter alia*, to public-sector procurement and investment policies, for example by encouraging households to integrate these criteria in their consumption strategies, and by urging companies to apply them more broadly so as to be able to "produce more while polluting less".

It is convinced that all measures and all instruments which are supposed to have an impact on the behaviour of consumers and producers must be studied within the framework of close co-operation between the public and private sector and that, to facilitate implementation, NGOs, consumer associations, trade unions and all other actors of civil society should be involved in this exercise.

It calls for a clear and internationally compatible consumer information system.

It advocates evaluations making it possible to measure both the effectiveness and the impact, on economic development, of all instruments used to effect changes in consumption and production patterns. The results of such studies should be published at the national and international levels primarily in order to promote the pooling of information on experience gathered.

It urges governments to introduce the issue of sustainable development in comprehensive curricula of educational institutions at all levels with a view, in particular, to preparing young people to adopt radically different and sound behaviour patterns in their adult life.

It stresses that it is up to the industrialised countries to set the example within their own countries and regions and to transfer their experience to developing countries.

It calls on the developed nations of the world to take special care to ensure that subsidised exports to developing countries do not negatively affect the fragile economies of those countries.

In particular, it urges all actors of the industrialised countries (public and private enterprise, transnational corporations, development institutions, etc.) to see to it that they transfer only environmentally sound technologies and production processes (including technologies and processes for handling and disposal of waste) to the developing countries.

It stresses the need to establish effective co-operation in the field of environmental protection and to co-ordinate environmental aspects of the economic activities of neighbouring countries which form a single environmental and economic area and it urges the international community, especially governments and parliaments, to discourage the transfer of nuclear waste to other countries, whose ability to dispose of them safely has not yet been verified internationally.

It calls on the developed countries to provide the developing countries with technical and financial assistance in the use of environmentally friendly technologies; and further calls on the developed countries to fulfil their pledge to contribute 0.7% of their GNP to Official Development Assistance by the year 2000, taking into consideration the need to eradicate poverty.

It stresses that these technologies and processes should be demand-oriented, environmentally sound and tailored to the needs of their potential users, in the light of the social, economic and cultural situation and priorities of the countries concerned giving preference, whenever possible, to local environmentally sound technologies which are likely to foster sustainable development.

It urges all States, especially the developed ones, to reallocate resources intended for military objectives to such peaceful purposes as development co-operation that will foster the well-being of the peoples of the developing world.

It calls on all individual parliamentarians and States to work together for regional and international peace and security, which are essential to truly sustainable development.

Lastly, it recalls that sustainable development can only be achieved by better economic and social policies and conditions, especially regarding the status of women, and calls for the introduction of gender-affirmative programmes to raise awareness in women so as to enable them to play a more active role in introducing the changes needed to eliminate consumption and production patterns which impede sustainable development.